'SOUND IDEAS'
MMF Primary Music Programme

Soo's Top Tips – Summer 2022

Introduction

Welcome to this series of short 'how to' music videos. Each short video will focus on one specific musical element (dimension) or strategy which will support teachers to successfully deliver musical activities in the classroom. The children featured in the videos are in Y6, but have not been taught by me before, so the strategies and activities are completely new to them and unrehearsed. All the topics have been suggested through discussions with Merton teachers and include an introduction to:

- **RHYTHM** and **PULSE**
- Teaching a **SONG**, incorporating understanding of the interrelated musical 'dimensions' (or 'elements')
- Using **PERCUSSION** to add effective accompaniments to a song
- Simple '**STICK NOTATION**' of short rhythm patterns, to create simple rhythm pieces and layered compositions

VIDEO 1 – PULSE and RHYTHM

What:
- **PULSE** – The steady, regular musical 'HEARTBEAT' of the music, which continues to be felt (and sometimes heard) throughout the piece. The pulse sets the speed – TEMPO – to change tempo, you alter the speed of the pulse.
- **RHYTHM** - A pattern of longer or shorter sounds and silences. When combined with PITCH, it makes melody. In a song the rhythm is fitted to the syllables of the words

Why:
Musicians need to be able to set and maintain the PULSE 'internally', so that the TEMPO stays steady, the piece has continuity and, if playing or singing in a group, everyone keeps together - harder than you might think!
Rhythm is what gives music energy and drive. When learning a new piece, if the rhythm is correct and secure first, the melody will be easier to learn and remember. In traditional Western music, we use a combination of symbols ('staff' or 'stave' notation) to represent sounds and silences, meaning that others can read and replicate them.

How:
00:00: Introducing Pulse to EYFS / KS1 : The Clock Says Tick-Tock
02:03: How to recognise and mark PULSE and RHYTHM in KS1 (+ marking a rest): Pease Pudding Hot
06:15: **Y1/2** - Grandma, Grandma rap
8.25: **KS2:** Oi! + Hey Ho Nobody Home

Merton Music Foundation

VIDEO 2: STRATEGIES FOR TEACHING A SONG

What:
A set of strategies which will give you lots of different ways to ensure that children learn songs quickly and accurately

Why:
Mistakes are reinforced and embedded quickly and are then very difficult to correct! Rehearsing the same song many times can become boring and counterproductive.

How:
00:00: Listening questions to focus attention and help them unconsciously absorb elements of the song and its' meaning

01:06: Marking **Phrase**, **Pulse**, **Rhythm**, **Thinking Voice**, **Pitch**, **Structure**, **what's the same / different?**
(Once a man fell in a well)

Putting it into action!

- 06:50: KS1 Build Up (BBC Collective Worship BBC Teach website)
  https://www.bbc.co.uk/teach/school-radio/primary-school-songs-assembly-collective-worship-build-up/zv6kg7h

- 16:50: KS2 Chain of Love (BBC Collective Worship BBC Teach website)
  https://www.bbc.co.uk/teach/school-radio/primary-school-songs-assembly-collective-worship-chain-of-love/z6dvp4j

- **Listen to a new song at least 3 or 4 times and use age-appropriate questions to focus pupils' listening, before they sing anything!**

Questions might include:
- *How many pulse beats are in the whole song or each phrase?*
- *How many phrases are within the song?*
- *What are the rhyming words and where do they come? (eg. ends of certain phrases; internal rhymes within phrases)*
- *Is there use of lyric devices like alliteration or assonance?*
- *How many times does a particular word or lyric phrase repeat?*
- *Direction of the pitch – going mainly up / down / staying the same?*
- *Rhythm – does a particular rhythmic phrase repeat – same / similar / different?*
- *What are meanings of specific words or phrases?*

Tips for efficient rehearsing

Use of the strategies below will help to develop pupils' general musicianship skills and understanding in addition to supporting vocal development.

- Use **flat of hand**, moving in degrees up or down or **Kodaly hand signs** and **pitch names** to denote **direction and degrees of pitch** and reinforce aurally the relationship between one pitch and another within a pitch group.

- Use the sung phrase **'Off we go'** to set both the desired **starting pitch** and **speed of the pulse (tempo)**. Use your thinking voice or sing quietly to set the pitch of 'doh', then sing up the scale (d-r-m-f-s-l etc) to find the correct starting pitch – the note on which the song begins.

- Sing certain phrases of the song and mark the others using hand signs and internal **'thinking' voice**. This helps greatly in improving **pitch-matching**.
  e.g.   Teacher sings Phrase A, pupils sign Phrase B
            All sing Phrase A, then sign Phrase B
            All sing and sign Phrase A, mark Phrase B with thinking voice

- Use an **arch movement** with the lower arm to mark the **number of phrases** within a song**.** Hold right elbow with left hand. Move right hand up and across in a arch-shape (like a rainbow) towards the right to mark Phrase 1, then back towards the left for Phrase 2 etc. This helps to highlight **structure,** to sing with a sense of musical 'direction', with some phrases 'setting out' and others 'returning'. It also promotes the use of 1 breath per melodic phrase.

- Compare **phrase lengths** – are some longer than others or are they all of equal length? Do this by tapping knees to count the number of pulse beats in each phrase. This also has a link with **structure.**

- **Marking pulse and rhythm differently** offers pupils both a visual and aural clue to help them **distinguish pulse from rhythm** and understand the relationship between them. **Tap knees** to mark the **pulse** beat - the steady, regular 'heartbeat' of the music. Use **two fingers tapped on palm of hand** to denote the **rhythm** (rhythm of a song is the pattern of sound and silence organised according to the word syllables).

- **Walk the pulse,** changing direction each time a new phrase starts. This can help to resolve difficulties in determining the **length of phrases** and **identifying the pulse.**

- **Compare the rhythm and melody of each phrase** – look for identical/different phrases. This helps to determine the **structure** of the song and demonstrates that the rhythmic and melodic structure of a piece is not necessarily the same.

- Split a song into phrases and divide it amongst the group. Sing in the correct order, with each group singing only their own designated phrase, then sing again, with the phrases in a different order. This also helps with **pitch-matching** and identifying **structure,** where phrases are the same or different.

- Ask pupils to **echo back sung phrases**, matching your sound exactly. Use this to explore **timbre** and **dynamics** and reflect on how the elements are used expressively to enhance meaning.

- Use **ostinato** (a repeated rhythmic or melodic phrase) and **cannon** to help develop **part-singing.**

- Be aware of basic techniques which will improve **vocal tone quality and control**.
  e.g.
  - **Correct posture** – back straight, shoulders/arms/hands relaxed and floppy, knees 'soft', feet same distance apart as hips. If sitting, use the edge of the seat – no leaning back!
  - **Use of diaphragm** to support the voice.
  - **Support from breath** - breathe deeply from the bottom of the lungs – watch shoulders don't rise!
  - **Clean, crisp articulation,** resulting in clear diction and focused tone.

VIDEOS 3 + 6: ADDING A PERCUSSION ACCOMPANIMENT TO A SONG

What:

A set of practical steps to use when adding an untuned or pitched percussion accompaniment to a song

Why:

A successful and effective accompaniment needs to enhance the original song, reinforce its meaning, emphasize its style and character, help communicate its message and above all, it must be musical and not overwhelm the song itself!

How: Golden Rules

1. Every instrument must have a musical JOB
2. Build an accompaniment up slowly and be prepared to back-track if it falls apart! Maintaining an independent line is difficult and needs lots of practice.
3. Use rhythms or short melodic phrases from the song itself, as OSTINATOS (repeated patterns)
4. Model the activity lots of times with smaller groups before attempting to engage a whole class in adding an accompaniment.

Land of the Silver Birch (using untuned percussion)

- Mark 1st beat of the bar, keeping pulse very steady
- Add a contrasting sound on Beat 3
- Use rhythms from the song itself to use as an ostinato (a repeated phrase, rhymes with Squashed Tomato!) – use thinking voice to help keep the pattern steady and accurate
- Gradually add more rhythms, to thicken the harmonic texture
- Gently mark the 4 pulse beats – the pulse will almost always get faster so choose your 'pulse-holder' carefully!

00:00: Spinning Top (using 3 notes from a Pentatonic scale, C, E and G)

OSTINATO = a short, repeated rhythmic or melodic pattern

- Start by combining a rhythm with 1 pitch from the selected group (in this case C E G)
- Improvise using more pitches, making sure they aren't too complicated to repeat successfully, until you find a pattern you like and can repeat successfully
- Gradually layer up the different patterns, to build up a more complex accompaniment, with a fuller texture

05:46: Engine, Engine (using 3 notes from a Pentatonic scale, C, E and G)

- Tap your chosen rhythm pattern on palm of hand, to practice keeping the pulse steady
- Add 1 pitch, then another and build more patterns up gradually
- Organise your pattens into a plan – structure – e.g. choose a pattern to act as an introduction, perhaps played through several times before the song begins; add 1, then 2, then 3 patterns gradually so they accumulate; decide how the song will end – all patterns finishing with the song or maybe dropping out one by one?

VIDEO 4: RHYTHM STICK NOTATION
(also see more detailed Sound Ideas Rhythm Notation document)

What:
A step-by-step method of representing sounds with spoken syllables, written symbols and notating simple rhythm patterns, using 'stick notation' (a stepping-stone to using classical Western rhythm notation)

Why:
The process of composition starts with improvisation. Once ideas have been chosen and 'fixed' they become composition. Using a form of notation (written representation of sounds and silences) means the composition can be replicated and repeated accurately by anyone who understands the symbols and can translate them back into meaningful sound.

How:
A clear understanding of PULSE is the key to building and notating simple rhythms
00:00:
- Start with 4 steady pulse beats and use the 'TA' syllable to chant them
- Sub-divide selected pulse beats into 2 even halves, using the 'TAY-YAY' syllables
- Add rests (silences) – mark on shoulders as this makes no sound
- Join 2 pulse beats together to make longer sounds – 'TA-AH'
- Sub-divide a pulse beat into 4 semi- quarters – 'TI-RI-TI-RI'
- Chant the rhythm syllables

- Chant and tap the syllables simultaneously
- Put the spoken syllables into 'thinking voice' and tap the rhythm

05:41: Practical demonstration with a group of Y6 pupils new to notation

Using the above method:
- *Our pulse beats = 'crotchets'*
- *The half-beats = 'quavers'*
- *The quarter beats = 'semi-quavers'*
- *The longer, combined 2 beat sounds = 'minims'*
- *The Z = a crotchet (1 beat) rest.*

VIDEO 5: VOCAL PART WORK
(also see more detailed Sound Ideas Developing Vocal Skills document)

What:
A guide to developing choral 'part-work' skills, enabling pupils to combine sung melody lines with other independent lines, to create harmony

Why:
The ability to hold an independent line of music, whilst different lines are going on around it, is a core musical skill that all musicians must develop, if they are to play and sing successfully with others, for example in a duet or ensemble

How:
00:00: First steps – they will need to be able to:
- Understand the importance of PULSE
- Use their musical THINKING VOICE
- Mark the PULSE and distinguish between PULSE and RHYTHM

02:02: Lil Liza Jane
- Separate rhythm from melody
- Chant the lyrics in rhythm
- Extend last note of each phrase, to create a very simple harmony
- Chant rhythm in cannon / round (1 phrase apart)
- Chant / sing in cannon
- Both groups sing in cannon

09:30: Frere Jacques - Practical demonstration with a group of Y6

Soo Bishop - Summer 2022